SGA
Student Government Association of Barnard College

Joint Statement in Solidarity with the Students at
Barnard College, Columbia University and Colleges across the United States
In Support of the Barnard Student Government Association (SGA) (2023 – 2024)
Representative for Seven Siblings Relations (2023 – 2024)
21 April 2024

To our college communities and administration:

On the 18th of April 2024, the President of Columbia University, Minouche Shafik, enlisted the New York City Police Department (NYPD) onto campus to arrest 108 peaceful student protestors outside Butler Library. Since then, the actions of administration have escalated to a crisis of student welfare and protection. On the same day, 55 suspended Barnard students were given 15 minutes to pack their belongings and leave their dorms, stripped of their access to campus buildings of which include dining halls, housing and the Primary Care Health Service center which is located in a residence hall. In order to prevent these students' access to campus buildings, their student IDs were also deactivated, which include their student emails. This means on April 22, when classes at Columbia and Barnard were brought online, the same students could not join their own lessons. Until April 22, there had been no formal campus-wide emails from the President of Barnard, Laura Ann Rosenbury. For nearly four days, President Rosenbury chose to stay silent in the face of student emails, appeals by members of the Barnard SGA, as well as arrests and indefinite suspensions imposed upon her students. She released a campus-wide email on April 22 at 7:08PM, only after a protest by faculty members part of the American Association of University Professors earlier in the afternoon. As of April 24 there are now 53 suspended Barnard students. The events described only form a general picture of the current campus climate at Barnard and Columbia, which, at the time of writing, continues to experience states of instability and turmoil that have proven detrimental to student welfare and education.

We, the undersigned, stand in solidarity with all Barnard and Columbia students, whose safety and wellbeing ought to be protected by members of their own administration, who have instead put them at risk by allowing indefinite suspension, arrest, disregard for welfare, intimidation, and forced removal from campus to occur.

We, the undersigned, stand in solidarity with all students in colleges across the United States, whose safety and wellbeing ought to be protected by members of their own administration, who

have instead similarly compromised them by allowing unjust doxxing, harassment, suspension, expulsion, bodily harm, arrest, criminal charge, intimidation, and forced removal from campus to occur.

We, the undersigned, condemn the actions of the Barnard administration, who have left the students in their care homeless and food-insecure, with restricted access to their personal belongings, student healthcare and education.

We, the undersigned, call on our college administrators to use their positions of influence to similarly condemn members of the Barnard administration, of whom disregarded student welfare, for their actions and President Rosenbury's silence that have led to the endangerment of her students.

We, the undersigned, call on our administrators to condemn the actions of President Shafik and members of her administration for calling the NYPD on peaceful student protests and her blatant disregard for the voices of not just students but faculty and other members of her administration who care for student welfare.

We, the undersigned, call on our college administrators to protect, defend and work to restore the welfare and academic freedom of all of our students, unconditionally provide sufficient compensation for all emotional and physical risks that have been put onto students by members of administration, and uphold the rights of all of our students to peaceful protest, advocacy, free speech, and unconditional safety.

We, the undersigned, call on our administrators to urge the administration of Barnard College and Columbia University to listen to the requests of the Barnard SGA. These requests include:

- Unconditionally repealing the interim suspension of Barnard and Columbia students, that occurred without due process nor fair disciplinary procedures;
- Unconditionally dropping all disciplinary measures against the suspended students, removing these from official records;
- Unconditionally reinstating student UNIs, student housing and access to all campus buildings to all suspended students;
- Holding an in-person and public meeting between Barnard SGA and Barnard administrators at the nearest possible time.

As your leaders on student government, we, the undersigned, call on you as our college community and administration to join us in fighting for justice for the students of Barnard College, Columbia University and college students across the United States, and by doing so, support and uphold all students' rights for self-advocacy, peaceful protest, academic freedom,

free speech, and physical and emotional safety within their campuses. We stand with the students of each of our colleges to exercise their rights to peaceful advocacy. **We will not let the actions of the Barnard and Columbia administration, nor the college administrations of schools across the United States, go unaccounted for.**

Sincerely signed,
Barnard College Student Government Association (2023–2024)
Wellesley College Government Cabinet (2023–2024)
Vassar Student Association Senate (2023–2024)
Haverford College Students' Council (2023–2024)
Bard College Student Government (2023–2024)
Williams College Williams Student Union (Spring 2024)
Smith College Student Government Association (2024–2025)
New York University Student Government Assembly (2023–2024)
Pomona College Associated Students of Pomona College Senate (2023–2024)
UC Berkeley's Associated Students (ASUC) External Affairs VP, Alex Edgar
Pitzer College Student Senate (2023–2024)
Stony Brook University Undergraduate Student Government Executive Council (2023–2024)
President | Sarah Lawrence Class of 2026 | Syd Walter (2023–2024)
President | Cornell Student Assembly (2023–2024), Patrick Kuehl
Executive Vice President | Cornell Student Assembly (2023–2024), Claire Ting
Middlebury College Student Government Association (2023–2024)

*This is an evolving list

CONTEXT

On 18 April 2024 at around 2PM,[1] the President of Columbia University, Minouche Shafik, called on the NYPD[2] to remove 108 peaceful student protesters from an encampment they had set up outside Butler Library on Columbia's campus.[3] This encampment was an action taken by students to demand the University's divestment from organizations profiting from Israel and part

[1] "Shafik authorizes NYPD to sweep 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment,' officers in riot gear arrest over 100." 2024. Columbia Spectator.
https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2024/04/18/shafik-authorizes-nypd-to-sweep-gaza-solidarity-encampment-as-officers-in-riot-gear-arrest-dozens/.
[2] Shafik, Minouche. 2024. "Letter to NYPD." Columbia Spectator. https://publicsafety.columbia.edu/content/letter-nypd.
[3] "Shafik authorizes NYPD to sweep 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment,' officers in riot gear arrest over 100." 2024. Columbia Spectator.
https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2024/04/18/shafik-authorizes-nypd-to-sweep-gaza-solidarity-encampment-as-officers-in-riot-gear-arrest-dozens/.

of a larger movement calling for the end of Israeli apartheid and freedom and justice for the Palestinian people.[4]

On the morning of 20 April 2024, it was reported that 55 students of Barnard College had been suspended indefinitely by the college administration and evicted from their dorms,[5] with only 15 minutes for them to pack their belongings. A resignation email from an ex-staff member of the college also suggests the lack of '*concrete* information on what [support would] be offered' to evicted students requiring accommodations for disabilities and similar needs.[6] Furthermore, 'Banned on Campus' posters of Barnard students with their names and faces printed were circulated 'to front desks at Barnard dorms.'[7] The evicted students can no longer access campus buildings of which include dining halls.[8] In a leaked email on the night of 20 April 2024, the Vice President and Dean of Barnard College, Leslie Grinage, whose responsibilities concern 'all student services that… enhance student life on campus',[9] told at least one suspended student to return to their home state when she was asked about housing accommodations.[10] When the suspended students had their student IDs deactivated, this included their student emails.[11] As such, when classes were shifted online on April 22,[12] these students were unable to attend even their own lessons. As of April 24, there are now 53 suspended Barnard students.[13]

In an email to the campus community, President Shafik cites Section 444 of the Charters and Statutes of Columbia University to explain her authorization of external authorities on campus. Section 444 specifies that the President may only exercise these steps 'upon consultation with a majority of a panel established by the University Senate's Executive Committee.'[14] However, the

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[4] Columbia University Apartheid Divest. 2023. "Columbia University Apartheid Divest: Who we are." Columbia Spectator. https://www.columbiaspectator.com/opinion/2023/11/14/columbia-university-apartheid-divest-who-we-are/.

[5] Columbia University Apartheid Divest. 2024. "50+ Barnard Students Suspended As Of This Morning." Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/C5_Hch4OGve/?img_index=1.

[6] Ex-Staff Member on Barnard Response Team and Columbia University Apartheid Divest. 2024. "Barnard Staffer Resigns Over Mistreatment of Students." Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/C5_prxSu7Io/?img_index=1.

[7] Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine. 2024. "BREAKING: Barnard issues "Banned on Campus" posters for its own students." Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/C5_AjMjO1Zg/?img_index=1.

[8] Columbia University Apartheid Divest. 2024. "50+ Barnard Students Suspended As Of This Morning." Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/C5_Hch4OGve/?img_index=1.

[9] Barnard College. n.d. "Campus Life and Student Experience." College Leadership. Accessed April 21, 2024. https://barnard.edu/college-leadership/dean-college.

[10] Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine. 2024. "Leaked Email: Dean Leslie Grinage telling suspended students to go back home when asked for housing accommodations." Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/C6AaTVwN8-Q/.

[11] Mueller, Sunaya, Sophie Meritt, and Lily Sones. 2024. "Barnard Suspends and Evicts Over 50 Students." Barnard Bulletin. https://thebarnardbulletin.com/2024/04/20/barnard-suspends-and-evicts-over-50-students/.

[12] Huddleston, Sarah, and Shea Vance. 2024. "'We need a reset': Shafik breaks silence, announces same-day shift to virtual classes." Columbia Spectator. https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2024/04/22/we-need-a-reset-shafik-breaks-silence-announces-same-day-shift-to-virtual-classes/.

[13] Stahl, Maya. 2024. "Barnard suspends and evicts at least 53 students, outlines steps for 'amnesty.'" Columbia Spectator. https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2024/04/23/barnard-suspends-and-evicts-at-least-53-students-outlines-steps-for-amnesty/.

[14] Columbia University The Office of the Secretary. 2022. "CHARTERS AND STATUTES - Columbia University." Office of the Secretary. https://secretary.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/University%20Statutes_January2022.pdf.

Columbia Spectator received confirmation[15] from Jeanine D'Armiento, Chair of the Executive Committee,[16] that 'the executive committee did not approve the presence of NYPD on campus,' and neither did the faculty and student members of this committee as relayed in an email sent to President Shafik.[17] Students who were suspended were then charged for trespassing.[18]

The University's response to Pro-Palestinian protests on campus typically involves the deployment of NYPD officers, vehicles, and equipment around the campus.[19] However, the approval and activation of numerous NYPD personnel in arresting student protestors was a shocking event that had not occurred since 1968,[20] in response to student protests against the Vietnam War.[21]

Until April 22, there had been no formal campus-wide emails from the President of Barnard, Laura Ann Rosenbury. For nearly four days, our President chose to stay silent in the face of student emails, appeals by members of our student government, as well as arrests and indefinite suspensions–or what the Senior Staff term 'interim suspensions'[22]–imposed upon her students. On April 22 at 7:08PM, she broke her silence in an email to members of the Barnard Community, citing the College's actions as seeking a 'prompt and compassionate resolution' to students who 'push boundaries or break rules' of student conduct.[23] However, this statement was released only after a Barnard faculty rally by the American Association of University Professors in the afternoon,[24] where they held signs which said 'Rosenbury: do not bully our students,' and

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[15] Columbia University Department of Physiology and Cellular Biophysics. n.d. "Jeanine D'Armiento, M.D., Ph.D." Columbia University. Accessed April 18, 2024. https://www.physiology.columbia.edu/Jeanine.html.

[16] Ibid.

[17] "Shafik authorizes NYPD to sweep 'Gaza Solidarity Encampment,' officers in riot gear arrest over 100." 2024. Columbia Spectator. https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2024/04/18/shafik-authorizes-nypd-to-sweep-gaza-solidarity-encampment-as-officers-in-riot-gear-arrest-dozens/.

[18] NYC Government. 2024. "Transcript: Mayor Adams Briefs Media on Recent Protests at Columbia University With NYPD Commissioner Caban." The Official Website of the City of New York. https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/289-24/transcript-mayor-adams-briefs-media-recent-protests-columbia-university-nypd.

[19] Muñoz, Avian. 2024. "Columbia to restrict Morningside Campus access to CUID holders ahead of 'activities that may impact campus this week.'" Columbia Spectator. https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2024/04/14/columbia-to-restrict-morningside-campus-access-to-cuid-holders-ahead-of-activities-that-may-impact-campus-this-week/.

[20] Columbia Daily Spectator. 1968. "University Calls In 1,000 Police to End Demonstration As Nearly 700 Are Arrested and 100 Injured; Violent Solution Follows Failure of Negotiations." Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions | 1968: Columbia in Crisis. https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/1968/bust.

[21] Patel, Vimal. 2024. "A protest 56 years ago became an important part of Columbia's culture." The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/18/nyregion/columbia-protest-1968-vietnam.html.

[22] The Barnard College Senior Staff. 2024. "Community Update." Barnard. https://barnard.edu/news/community-update.

[23] Rosenbury, Laura A. 2024. "Care During Challenging Times." Barnard Community Messages. https://barnard.edu/news/care-during-challenging-times.

[24] Meritt, Sophie, and Lily Sones. 2024. ""Hands Off Our Students": Barnard and Columbia Faculty Protest Student Arrests, Suspensions, and Evictions." Barnard Bulletin. https://thebarnardbulletin.com/2024/04/22/hands-off-our-students-barnard-and-columbia-faculty-protest-student-arrests-suspensions-and-evictions/.

“Bold. Beautiful. Suspended.’, demanding a dean and the President to ‘house our students’ and ‘feed our students’, chanting ‘Talk to us! Talk to us!’[25]

According to President Rosenbury’s email on April 22, Barnard College would only ‘lift the interim suspensions, and immediately restore [the suspended students’] access to College buildings’[26]–in more direct terms, this would include reactivating their student IDs–if these students agree to listen to the College’s demands: follow ‘all Barnard rules’ on a ‘probationary period’.[27] Only then would the College remove evidence of this incident on the students’ academic transcripts and disciplinary records, unless ‘future misconduct’ is found.[28] Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that ‘higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.’[29] The issuance of President Rosenbury’s ultimatum regarding student’s access to basic needs and rights to quality education is thus deeply disturbing.

The Student Government Association of Barnard College asks that you consider the context of the continuing protests and encampment on campus: the protests today are part of an ongoing movement by students since the events of 7 October 2023.[30] They ask that student leaders honor their duty to protect the welfare of students and lead by example.

[25] Ibid.
[26] Rosenbury, Laura A. 2024. “Care During Challenging Times.” Barnard Community Messages. https://barnard.edu/news/care-during-challenging-times.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] United Nations General Assembly. 1948. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.
[30] Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine and Columbia Jewish Voice for Peace. 2023. “Columbia SJP and JVP 10/9 Open Letter.” Wikipedia. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RcXX5DEO3yfJ9R4ksURnzpIPCyVxo575-Y-SoC_vZFk/edit?usp=sharing.